

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 LAB-04

SIL-01 IO-13 /113 W

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P 011354Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8225

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

US INT HAVANA 093

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1950

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ET

SUBJ: SUBDUED MAY DAY CELEBRATION

SUMMARY: PERHAPS BECAUSE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER (BONE-CHILLING RAIN MOST OF MORNING) ETHIOPIA CELEBRATED MAY DAY IN GREATLY SUBDUED MANNER DESPITE WEEK-LONG PREPARATIONS. RHETORIC OF THREE SPEAKERS, INCLUDING DIRG CHAIRMAN MENGISTU, WAS APPROPRIATELY ANTI-IMPERIALIST AND PRO-WORKER, BUT AVOIDED SPECIFIC ATTACKS ON U.S. OR OTHER WESTERN POWERS. PROPER APPRECIATION WAS ACCORDED SOVIETS, CUBANS AND EAST GERMANS, WITH REVOLUTION SQUARE GRACED ONCE AGAIN BY NEW PORTRAITS OF MARX, LENIN AND ENGELS AND RED THE COLOR OF THE DAY. PARADE AND SPEECHES WERE INTERESTING BY WHAT THEY FAILED TO MENTION (U.S., "RED TERROR,") AND BY THEIR GENERALLY MODERATE TONE WITHIN THE ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT. END SUMMARY

1. ADDIS ABABA STREETS BEGAN TO FILL AT 6 A.M. WITH "WORKERS", STUDENTS AND OTHER MARCHERS BEDECKED IN RED SHIRTS, HATS, NECKERCHIEFS AND BANNERS FOR MAY DAY CELEBRATION AT REVOLUTION SQUARE. AROUND 8 A.M. COLD RAIN BEGAN TO FALL WHICH PERSISTED THROUGH MOST OF PARADE AND ALL THREE SPEECHES. THIS
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DAMPENED SOME OF ENTHUSIASM WHICH HAD BEEN BUILDING PAST WEEK THROUGH SPORTS FESTIVAL. MENGISTU'S RETURN FROM CUBA AND PRESENCE IN ADDIS OF DELEGATES TO ANTI-IMPERIALIST SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE PREPARATORY MEETING.

2. SPEECHES AT REV. SQUARE WERE PRECEDED BY STANDARD SLOGAN CHANTING CONSPICUOUSLY DEVOID OF ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC. FIRST SPEAKER WAS

ALL-ETHIOPIAN TRADE UNION (AETU) 1ST VICE-SECRETARY AND ACTING CHAIRMAN GEDLU TEKLE. THROUGH CURIOUS LOGIC, GEDLU PRAISED FORMER ETHIOPIAN LABOR UNION (CELU) FOR ITS GENERAL STRIKE IN 1974 THAT PROVIDED SPARK AND IMPETUS TO ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION, BUT DENOUNCED CELU'S FORMER LEADERS AS CIA AGENTS (AS HAS PRESS DURING PAST WEEK, EXPECIALLY CELU FORMER SENGEN BEYNE SOLOMON). HOWEVER, GEDLU NATURALLY DID NOT DRAW INELUCTABLE CONCLUSION THAT CIA WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. HE DID SAY THAT WORKERS WERE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN ERITREAN CAMPAIGN AND VOWED THAT VICTORY IN OGADEN WOULD BE REPEATED IN NORTH. HE CONCLUDED BY THANKING SOVIET UNION, GDR AND CZECHOSLAVAKIA FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS WEEK (APRIL 22-30) LEADING TO MAY DAY.

3. NEXT SPEAKER WAS NEWLY-ELECTED (APRIL 30) CHAIRMAN OF ALL ETHIOPIAN PEASANTS' ASSOCIATION (AEPa) ABDELLAH SEVNESSA. HE NOTED THAT IT WAS HISTORIC OCCASION FOR FIRST AEPa CHAIRMAN TO SPEAK ON MAY DAY. HE PLEDGED TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION BETWEEN AETU AND AEPa AND SAID THESE TWO MASS ORGANIZATIONS WERE THE FOUNDATION OF WORKERS' PARTY. IT INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT ABDELLAH IS FROM ARSSI REGION IN SOUTH WHERE LAND REFORM HAS BEEN MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL AND THAT HE IS NOT AN AMHARA OR AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN.

4. DIRG CHIRMAN MENGISTU WAS HEAD SPEAKER AND HE INTER-SPERSED HIS CALMLY MEASURED, LOW-KEY SPEECH WITH APPROPRIATE CONFIDENTIAL

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ANTI-IMPERIALIST RHETORIC, MORE AS WINDOW-DRESSING FOR HIS "RADICAL" CREDENTIALS THAN AS THE CRUX OF HIS REMARKS. HE NOTED ETHIOPIA'S FULL SUPPORT FOR "STRUGGLING PROGRESSIVE LIBERATION FRONTS AND OTHER ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENTS" AND CALLED ON THE MAY DAY PARTICIPANTS TO APPLAUD MRS. SALVADOR ALLENDE, WHO WAS PRESENT, FOR "HER CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE CHILE." ASKING RHETORICALLY WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION, MENGISTU ANSWERED IT WAS "INHUMAN CONDITIONS CREATED BY FORMER LANDLORDS AND FUEDO-BOURGEOIS REGIME, WHICH OPPRESSED BROAD MASSES OF ETHIOPIA". HE NOTED "RIGHT-ROADERS" WHO HAD DESERTED REVOLUTION LAST JULY/AUGUST THINKING THEY WERE ONLY TRUE REVOLUTIONARIES AND THAT REVOLUTION WOULD STOP BECAUSE OF THEIR LOSS, HAVE BEEN PROVEN WRONG. REVOLUTION HAS NOT BEEN STOPPED BUT RATHER HAS INTENSIFIED. MENGISTU THEN CITED FIVE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST MAY DAY AS; A) DEFEAT OF AGGRESSION AT REACTIONARY ARAB COUNTRIES AND IMPERIALISTS (OGADEN) B) IMPOSITION OF CONTROL OVER "FIFTH COLUMNISTS" (EPRP) C) INTENSIFICATION OF REVOLUTION DESPITE DEFECTION OF "RIGHT-ROADERS" (AESM OR ME'I SONE) D) ACQUISITION

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1950

OF SUPPORT FROM WORLD'S PROGRESSIVE COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY USSR, CUBA AND GDR, AND E)FORMATION OF AEPA. TURNING TO OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS CONFRONTING ETHIOPIA, MENGISTU SAID EFFORT TO RE-HABILITATE THE OGADEN WAS EQUIVALENT TO SUCCESSFUL WAR CAMPAIGN AND MUST BE PURSUED WITH EQUAL DETERMINATION. ON ERITREA HE WARNED "IMPERIALISTS" THAT RED SEA COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED BY THEM THROUGH ERITREA NOR DID THEY HAVE ANY PLACE IN ETHIOPIA. MENGISTU TOLD CROWD THAT HE HAD BEEN ASSURED IN CUBA OF THE SUPPORT OF PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE OF WORLD, BUT THIS WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY WITHIN ERITREAN CONTEXT. HE CONCLUDED SPEECH WITH NATIONALISTIC SLOGANS DEVOID OF ANTI-U.S. REFERENCES.

5. MAY DAY CELEBRATION AND SPEECHES WERE MORE INTERESTING BY THEIR EMISSIONS THAN BY THEIR COMMISSIONS. FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS FOR MAY DAY AND MENGISTU'S PUBLICLY SUCCESSFUL TRIP TO CUBA, THE ABSENCE OF ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC WAS STRIKING. THERE WAS ALSO NO MENTION OF "RED TERROR" OR ITS INTENSIFICATION, WHICH CONFORMS WITH OTHER INDICATIONS(SEPTEL) THAT DIRG HAS DECIDED TO PUT LID ON CAMPAIGN FOR MOMENT. THERE WERE NUMEROUS OBLIQUE REFERENCES TO ESTABLISHMENT OR WORKERS' PARTY BUT THIS DOES NOT APPEAR IMMINENT. MENGISTU'S AND GEDLU'S REMARKS ON ERITREA WERE NOT PARTICULARLY STIRRING NOR SURPRISING.
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MENGISTU'S CITATION OF "INHUMAN CONDITIONS" AS CAUSE OF REVOLUTION DEMONSTRATED YET AGAIN HIS CONTINUING BELIEF THAT

ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION HAS BEEN AIMED AT AND HAS SUCCEEDED IN
IMPROVING THE GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS OF ETHIOPIANS DESPITE
EXTERNAL MEDIA CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY. IT MAY BE PREMATURE TO
SPECULATE ACCURATELY ON ETHIOPIA'S FUTURE DIRECTION FOLLOWING
OGADEN VICTORY AND PRIOR TO ERITREA CAMPAIGN, BUT THE POSSI-
BILITY OF POLICY DIFFERENCES WITH THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS OVER
ERITREA AND ON "CONFEDERATION" WITH SOMALIA, AS WELL AS
NON-EXISTANT ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC PAST FEW WEEKS, COULD BE
BEGINNING OF MORE TRULY NON-ALIGNED ETHIOPIAN POLICY, AT
LEAST IN ETHIOPIAN PERCEPTIONS. MAJOR CONSIDERATION WOULD BE ETHIOPIA
N
ESTIMATION THAT ITS MILITARY NEEDS HAVE BEEN ADEQUATELY MET
FOR SHORT-TERM (2-4 YRS.) AND THAT ALL INTERNATIONAL
SOURCES MUST BE EXPLOITED FOR ETHIOPIA'S ECONOMIC NEEDS.
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